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US actions plagued by exceptionalism

Two American figures' divergent statecraft prescriptions reveal a blind spot that plagues Washington's actions and future in a multipolar world **6**

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Clean energy can create shared opportunities for China and UK

As the UK advances its green economy agenda, a call from its energy sector illustrates the positive role Chinese enterprises could play in reducing costs. The potential for mutually beneficial cooperation is clear **12**



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who is on an official visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on January 29, 2026. Photo: Xinhua

► Xi calls on China, Britain to advocate true multilateralism

Xi meets Starmer as two nations eye long-term, stable relations

By GT staff reporters

Chinese President Xi Jinping and visiting British Prime Minister Keir Starmer agreed on Thursday in Beijing that the two countries should develop a long-term, stable comprehen-

sive strategic partnership, Xinhua News Agency reported.

According to China Central Television, noting that the Year of the Horse is just around the corner, Xi said that he believes Starmer's visit will be a success and the cooperation be-

XI'S MOMENTS

tween the two countries will "Yi Ma Dang Xian," which literally means "a horse charging ahead" or is commonly used to

mean "taking the lead."

Xi said as the world today is undergoing both changes and turbulence, China and Britain, as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and major economies,

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Visit

War risks loom in Middle East as US-Iran tensions rise

By GT staff reporters

In the past 24 hours, the risk of military conflict erupting in the Middle East, particularly around Iran, has spiked dramatically. Media reports on Thursday indicate that US President Donald Trump is weighing military options against Iran, including targeted strikes on Iranian security forces and key leaders, while simultaneously deploying additional military forces to the Middle East.

Facing intensifying pressure from Washington, Iranian officials have issued stern warnings of tit-for-tat retaliation. Meanwhile, regional countries have voiced deep concerns over the looming threat of military conflict. China has also emphasized that military adventurism would only push the entire region into an unpredictable and catastrophic abyss.

As tensions continue to escalate, global gold and oil markets have responded with sharp price surges, reflecting growing market anxiety over the deepening crisis.

Surging risks of conflict

Citing sources, Reuters reported on Thursday that US President Donald Trump is weighing options against Iran that include targeted strikes on security forces and leaders to inspire protesters, even as Israeli and Arab officials said air power alone would not topple the current regime.

According to the BBC on Thursday, a US Navy drone has been operating over the Gulf near the coast of Iran since the early hours of this morning, citing FlightRadar24 tracking data.

The US already has between

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Both

Visit augurs a reset of ties grounded in realism: expert

►Xi, from Page 1

should enhance dialogue and cooperation in order to maintain world peace and stability, while promoting the economy and people's livelihoods in both countries.

Emphasizing the need to see history from a broader perspective, Xi called on the two countries to transcend differences and maintain mutual respect, so that they can translate the promising potential of cooperation into remarkable accomplishments, and open up new vistas for China-Britain relations and cooperation to better benefit the two peoples and the world at large.

Noting that the international order has for some time suffered serious disruption, Xi said international law can only be truly effective when all countries, major countries in particular, abide by it. Otherwise, the world would risk regressing to the law of the jungle, he said.

China and Britain, as supporters of multilateralism and free trade, should jointly advocate and practice true multilateralism, and facilitate the establishment of a more just and equitable global governance system, so as to build an equal and orderly multipolar world and realize universally beneficial and inclusive globalization, Xi said.

Starmer conveyed greetings from King Charles III to President Xi. He said he was pleased to be the first British prime minister to visit China in eight years, according to Xinhua.

The UK and China are major global economies and permanent members of the UN Security Council, and under the current turbulent and fragile international situation, it

is crucial for the UK, in the spirit of mutual respect and mutual trust, to build a long-term, stable comprehensive strategic partnership with China, said Starmer.

The UK's long-standing policy on the Taiwan question has not changed and will not change, Starmer noted.

The Global Times has learned that during British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's visit to China, the two countries reached a series of significant outcomes aimed at restarting and deepening bilateral ties.

In addition, the two sides signed 12 inter-governmental cooperation documents covering fields such as economy and trade, agriculture and food security, culture, and market regulation.

Business cooperation

Also on Thursday, UK drugmaker AstraZeneca announced that it would invest \$15 billion in China through 2030 to expand medicines manufacturing and research and development, marking the biggest deal so far during the trip, according to Reuters.

Starmer's visit augurs a reset of a relationship that, a decade ago, was enjoying what was widely described as a "golden age," but which has since become fractured and overly politicized, John Quelch, executive vice chancellor and distinguished professor of social science at Duke Kunshan University, told the Global Times in a written interview on Thursday.

This visit signals an intention to move beyond that impasse and to re-establish a more mature and sophisticated conversation between China and the UK – one that is grounded in realism rather than rhetoric, Quelch said.

Starmer is the latest Western leader to engage in a flurry of diplomacy with China as nations hedge against unpredictability from the US under President Donald Trump, The Guardian reported. For the UK, the trip comes at a time of weak economic growth and an urgent need to attract overseas investment, the BBC noted.

China and the UK enjoy broad prospects for cooperation in the economic sphere, and at a time when the international order is facing challenges, the two countries can work together to take the lead in safeguarding the international law and global cooperation, Li Guanjie, a research fellow at the Shanghai Academy of Global Governance and Area Studies under Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times.

Such cooperation can advance true multilateralism – one based on cooperation among countries without external interference – rather than power politics driven by hegemonic interests, Li said.

Ahead of the visit, Starmer released a video on social media previewing his trip, saying it marked the first visit to China by a British prime minister in eight years. "We've got 60 CEOs of businesses and cultural organizations coming with us to drum up business, take opportunities and deliver for the United Kingdom," he said, underscoring the commercial focus of the visit.

"The size and seniority of the accompanying business delegation show that this is not merely symbolic," Quelch said. "The UK faces pressing growth challenges, and deeper trade and investment ties with China can play a constructive role."

Both sides grapple with strategic constraints, escalating pressures: analyst

►War, from Page 1

30,000 and 40,000 troops in the region, with forces including five air wings – command units comprised of about 70 aircraft – across as many countries and five warships, including two destroyers, along with air defense systems, the Financial Times (FT) said.

Ali Shamkhani, a senior advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, warned that "any military action by the US from any source and at any level will be considered the start of war, and any response will be immediate, all-out, and unprecedented," Xinhua reported on Thursday.

Shamkhani stressed that Iran's response will target "the aggressor, the heart of Tel Aviv, and all of the aggressor's supporters," per Xinhua.

According to AP reporter Jon Gambrell's X post, Iran issued a warning to ships at sea Thursday that it planned to run a drill next week that would include live firing in the Strait of Hormuz.

Washington has steadily intensified its deterrence against Tehran, combining heightened pressure through public opinion and cognitive warfare with parallel military movements and deployments. Iran, for its part, has responded on both the rhetorical and military fronts. Against this backdrop, the likelihood of a US-Iran conflict has continued to rise, said Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

Global concerns

Amid an already volatile global landscape, the escalation of tensions surrounding Iran and Middle East has sparked more global concerns.

Fu Cong, the Chinese envoy to the UN, said at a UN Security Council high-level debate on the Middle East on Wednesday local time that any military adventurism would only push the region into an unpredictable abyss.

China calls on all parties to abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, opposes interference in other countries' internal affairs, and opposes the use or threat of force in international relations, Fu said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday told his UAE counterpart, Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, that Moscow is closely monitoring the situation in Iran, and he wants to discuss it with him in Kremlin talks, Al Jazeera reported.

Some regional countries have also voiced concerns over the growing war risks. Turkey is weighing contingency plans along its border if the US attacks neighboring Iran, a senior official who requested anonymity told AFP on Thursday.

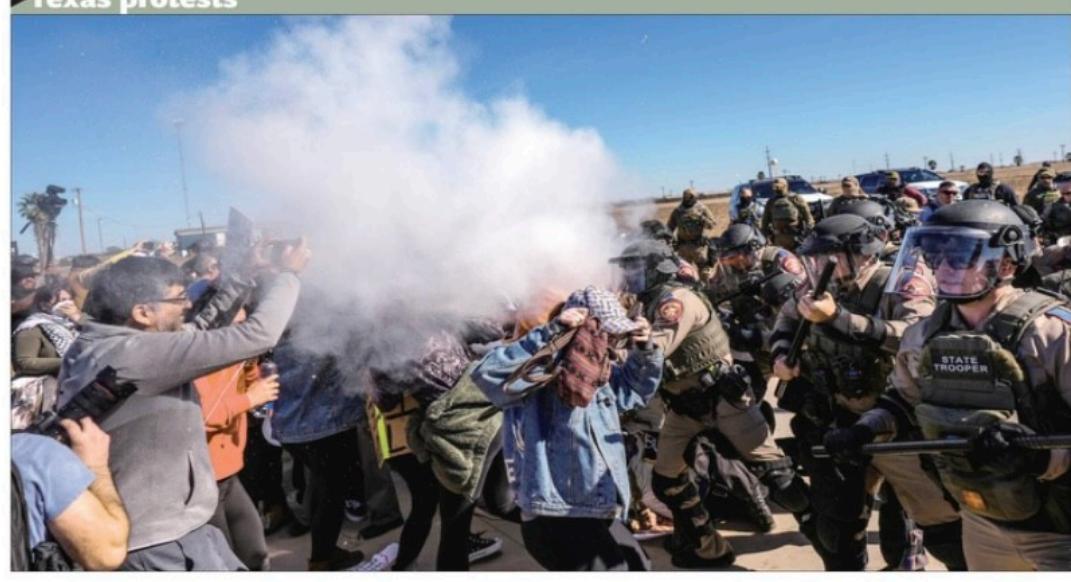
Regional states – including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and Egypt – have urged Washington not to strike Iran, worried they would be prime targets for retaliation, the Gulf News reported on Thursday.

Gold prices have set a new record amid US threats of military action against Iran and the weakness of the US dollar, Al Jazeera reported.

Bullion surged past \$5,500 an ounce on Thursday, extending an extraordinary rally that has seen the precious metal gain more than 20 percent in value since the start of the year, the media report said.

Brent oil futures prices jumped on Thursday, hitting a four-month high on rising concerns about a possible US military attack on Iran, OPEC's fourth-largest producer with output of 3.2 million barrels per day, Reuters reported.

Texas protests



Pepper spray is dispersed toward protesters on January 28, 2026 outside the South Texas Family Residential Center detention facility where 5-year-old Liam Ramos and his father are being detained in Dilley, Texas. Photo: VCG

